

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS HANOI 000409

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: MORE PROTESTS OVER IRAQ

REF: A. HANOI 396 B. HCMC 157 C. USUN 413

11. (U) On February 19, the national Youth Federation and the Hanoi Youth Federation jointly sponsored a rally at the Hanoi Medical University opposing war in Iraq and expressing solidarity with the people of Iraq. According to press reports, more than 1,000 students and young people from a variety of institutions took part (although press photos indicated a hefty component of middle aged or older participants at least in the front rows). The rally, like similar ones in Hue and Ho Chi Minh City also on February 19, received prominent media coverage. The Vietnam Lawyers Association separately expressed support for a political solution to the Iraq issue in conformity with the UN Charter and international law.

12. (U) The youth meeting in Hanoi passed a resolution proclaiming that "Vietnamese youth oppose war against Iraq" and calling on people around the world to make every effort to "protect peace." Participants also insisted the "US and U.K. stop military action against Iraq" and "respect the independence and sovereignty" of Iraq. One speaker denounced the "military pressure" of "US authorities" on Iraq and threats to "world peace and stability."

13. (U) Vietnamese media also gave prominent coverage to pro-inspections, anti-war comments by the Vietnamese deputy permanent representative to the United Nations at the Security Council on February 18 (ref c).

14. (U) Comment: The language used at this "mass" rally was almost identical to expressions from similarly organized demonstrations on February 18 (refs a and b), further indicating the centrally-directed nature of the "protests" and the likelihood that other mass organizations will follow suit in the coming days. Embassy's requests to meet with student unions in Hanoi have been politely rebuffed by the central Youth Federation since October 2002. It is another telling indicator of the Leninist top-down nature of this system that the leaders of the national Youth Federation are in the 30s and 40s, and the leaders of most university student unions appear to be 20ish lecturers rather than actual students.

BURGUARDT